taking place in the Sixth Committee of the UN General Assembly, with a view to reach consensus on the remaining outstanding issues.

Pendency of passport applications in Punjab

185. SHRI VARINDER SINGH BAJWA Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the estimated time required for the issuing of a new passport in Punjab circle;

(b) the number of application lying pending in Punjab for the purpose;

(c) the steps taken by Government for their quick disposal; and

(d) whether the staff strength is sufficient to clear the back log?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) The estimated time required for issuance of a new passport in Punjab is as under:

Passport Office at Chandigarh:	60-75 days
Passport Office at Jalandhar :	30-35 days

(b) The number of applications pending for issue of passports after receipt of Police Verification Report (PVR) as on 11.11.2005 in Punjab is given below:

Chandigarh		28598
Jalandhar	:	514

(c) and (d) The pendency is largely on account of shortage of staff to cope with the increasing number of applications and also shortage in supply of the requisite number of blank passport booklets by the India Security Press (ISP), Nasik. The matter of augmenting staff strength is already being pursued through a study by the Staff Inspection Unit of the Ministry of Finance. The issue of adequate supply of blank passport booklets is also being followed up continuously with ISP, Nasik and the concerned authorities in Government of India. However, at the same time, all efforts are being made to reduce the pendency to the maximum possible extent by using the existing staff.